Afternoons of April

By Grace Hazard Conkling

THE NEW POETRY SERIES

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AFTERNOONS OF APRIL

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A Book of Verse

BY

GRACE HAZARD CONKLING

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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TO MY FATHER

Christopher Grant Hazard, D.D.

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

"So now, in the end, if this the least be good,
If any deed be done, if any fire
Burn in the imperfect page, the praise be thine."

R. L. S.

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AFTERNOONS OF APRIL

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PROSERPINA AND THE SEA-NYMPHS

PROSERPINA

I TIRE of these embroideries.
Now I have gilded all my stars
And plumed with light my ilex-trees
And made the moon and sun, there is
The sea to finish. Only this
Eludes my eager hand and mars
The beauty of my tapestry.
Which color of the changeful sea
Would she most love, my mother? Blue
Superbly shadowed like her hood,
Or blazing, like her peacock? — hue
Of dawn or wine or purple silk
With foamy fringes white as milk?
There is a gray-green much her mood
In early Spring. . . . Nay, I must go
And ask the sea-nymphs. They will know.

SEA-NYMPHS (*singing*)

Mother Ceres' daughter
  Straying down the shore,
Brings with her a beauty
  Never known before.
(Who had heard, until she came,
Such a ripple of a name?)

PROSERPINA

I hear them singing on the shore,
My little sisters of the sea!
Surely I can return before
The golden lonesome afternoon
Leans toward the dusk?
I shall come soon
And weave a miracle for thee,
My mother, out of showered light
Upon great waters: and to-night
Give thee my tapestry of dreams,
And sing thee what the sisters sing.
. . . Too bright the sea! Unreal it seems,
And so aloof, I hardly know,
With all its glory changing so,
How I dare try embroidering —
Oh, they are there, all wet and cool
From out the foam, and beautiful!

SEA-NYMPHS (*singing*)

Is there any flower
  Delicate as she?
Only tender-breathing
  Sea-anemone.
(Maidens, was there ever heard
Such a little limpid word?)

PROSERPINA

Laugh, laugh again, for I so love
Your glittering laughter in the sun,
Like sudden wave-crests fashioned of
Bubbles and rainbows! Did you say
Nobody knew you came away?
Then I am not the only one
Truant along these yellow sands!
(How soft your little starfish hands!)
Now tell me, darlings, is it true
You travel far within the sea,
And drive the dolphins two and two?
And are there islands rooted deep,
That you must scale like mountains steep,
To find out what their names may be?
(*I* made an island, once, a shore
Dazzled with surf.) . . . Oh, tell me more!

SEA-NYMPHS (*singing*)

Fair the clustered islands,
  Deep the coral wells!
You who bring us flowers,
  Do you like our shells?
These, all jeweled, only grow
On an island that we know.

Who has felt its beauty
  Cannot go away.
It is like a crystal
  Irised in bright spray. . . .
There is untold mystery
In the islands of the sea!

One is all a garden,
  One has sands of gold.
One is built of silver:
  One is very old,
Made of coral, and most fair.
One conceals the GORGONS' lair.

Shells of many islands
  Blossoming from foam,
See, they make a necklace!
  Will you wear it home?

Asphodels are sweet, but ours
Are the everlasting flowers.

PROSERPINA

And I shall keep them evermore!
But in the April-colored mead
Beyond the crescent of the shore,
There are such lilies! Let me get
Enough of them, with violet
And hyacinth as I may need,
To make you each a coronal!
You will not have to wait at all,
They are so many and so sweet!
Throw me your little dripping kiss!
Look, there are wings upon my feet,
Wait for me! . . .
(*Alone*) (Now, you asphodels
Rose-lined and petaled like sea-shells,
Could any fate be strange as this —
The nymphs' green tresses to confine,
And plunge full fathom-deep in brine?)

I never thought to make them say
The wisest color for my sea!
Corn-flower blue it was to-day,
And veined with topaz. . . . If I go

Much farther, now the sun is low,
The sisters will not wait for me,
But April only once a year
Comes true. . . . What loveliness is here —
These unknown flowers waxen-white
That glimmer in a starry crowd
A-shiver with their own delight?
Mother must tell me. . . . Are they real?
Whence the sharp terror that I feel?
Dread Darkness — art thou god or cloud
Enfolding me?
My mother, oh
Hear thou, and make him let me go!

SEA-NYMPHS (*singing, far away*)

Do you see her coming?
Did you hear her call?
There is sudden menace
In the sky, and all
The bright waters have gone gray.
Little friend, we dare not stay!

THE BARBERRY BUSH

THREADING the wood, if I might see
A hamadryad leave her tree,
Or Pan with dripping honeycomb
Luring a nymph away from home,
Eager to ask some friendly faun
What way Proserpina had gone,
Or catch an accent, pungent, wild,
Of garrulous Hermes, like a child
I grieved to miss them. Everything
Was hushed: no creature cared to sing,
Nor memory of song sufficed:
The earth had grown unparadised.

But where a barberry in flower
Had tossed against the sun a shower
Of pendent blossoms, golden shapes
Clustered like small immortal grapes
Grown for a baby Bacchus, all
The air turned rich and musical
With honeyed little changing chimes
Only a bee makes when he climbs
A bell-shaped bloom, and being stout,
Shakes pollen-dust and music out.

THE BARBERRY BUSH

Whether the barberry had made
A compact with the winds, afraid
To lose her sweets if wind should blow,
Or what she offered, can I know?
But all her essence hovered there
Diffused in aromatic air
That glittered like a living wine:
Her soul exhaled, besieging mine
With beauty, making me at home
Within the windless delicate dome
Of vaulted fragrance over her:
Some poignancy of mint or myrrh,
Rosemary-whim, lavender-lure,
Or balm of bruiséd balsam pure,
Some whiff of fern, fennel or rue,
Tang of the wild grass steeped in dew,
Had Hermes flung her from mid-flight
As benison for his delight?
For incense-strange and spiced was she,
A pensioner of Araby,
Dreaming her dream of wingéd feet
And cloud-lost laughter bittersweet.

Yet not for Hermes did each urn
Of hidden honey yield in turn
Its amber to the pilgrim bees!

Their god is Pan, the god of trees,
Who pipes for them all blossom-news,
And knows what melody to use
For ripe wild-grape and apple-tree,
And you in bloom, O Barberry!
Was that your *motif* that I heard
His veery sing, in which recurred
Honey and spices, grape-bloom mist,
Young leaves in evening amethyst,
With ringing of thin topaz bells
Like small close-clustered asphodels?

So sang Pan's veery, so sang he,
That all the world was Thessaly,
And any cedar might avail
To hold an answering nightingale.
The mosses by the oak-tree's root
Caressed a gleaming naked foot,
But quick as light the nymph was gone.
I glimpsed the brown pursuing faun
And heard the chiming of their glee.
Proserpina eluded me,
But from your blossoms showered down,
I guessed the color of her gown —
What else but color of the sun?
And singing veery there was none

Until into my mood you flowered,
Illumining the wood unbowered.

Now kindly Pan forevermore
Be mindful of you! May he store
Your honey in Arcadian jars,
Summon back Hermes from the stars
Into your zone of spicy zest —
A little Orient in the West!
Jeweled with bees, gilded with bloom,
You shall hold court within your room
If once he pipe beside the door,
The Master Improvisator!
Thither may he resort, content
To find you richly redolent,
And make you music all your own,
So river-sweet in reedy tone,
It shall inspire at evening hush
His brown immortal veery-thrush.

SYMPHONY OF A MEXICAN GARDEN

I.	THE GARDEN.	*Poco sostenuto* in A major
		"The laving tide of inarticulate air"
		Vivace in A major
		"The iris people dance"
II.	THE POOL.	*Allegretto* in A minor
		"Cool-hearted dim familiar of the doves"
III.	THE BIRDS.	*Presto* in F major
		"I keep a frequent tryst"
		Presto meno assai in D major
		"The blossom-powdered orange-tree"
IV.	TO THE MOON.	*Allegro con brio* in A major
		"Moon that shone on Babylon"

*
* *

TO MOZART

What junipers are these, inlaid
With flame of the pomegranate tree?
The god of gardens must have made
This still unrumored place for thee
To rest from immortality
And dream within the splendid shade
Some more elusive symphony
Than orchestra has ever played.

I. In A major

THE GARDEN

Poco sostenuto

THE laving tide of inarticulate air
Breaks here in flowers as the sea in foam,
But with no satin lisp of failing wave;

The odor-laden winds are very still.
An unimagined music here exhales
In upcurled petal, dreamy bud half-furled,
And variations of thin vivid leaf:
Symphonic beauty that some god forgot.
If form could waken into lyric sound,
This flock of irises like poising birds
Would feel song at their slender feathered throats,
And pour into a gray-winged aria
Their wrinkled silver finger-marked with pearl.
That flight of ivory roses high along
The airy azure of the larkspur spires
Would be a fugue to puzzle nightingales
With too-evasive rapture, phrase on phrase.
Where the hibiscus flares would cymbals clash,
And the black cypress like a deep bassoon
Would hum a clouded amber melody.

But all across the trudging ragged chords
That are the tangled grasses in the heat,
The mariposa lilies fluttering
Like trills upon some archangelic flute,
The roses and carnations and divine
Small violets that voice the vanished god,
There is a lure of passion-poignant tone
Not flower-of-pomegranate (that finds the heart

As stubborn oboes do) can breathe in air,
Nor poppies, nor keen lime, nor orange-bloom.

What zone of wonder in the ardent dusk
Of trees that yearn and cannot understand,
Vibrates as to the golden shepherd horn
That stirs some great *adagio* with its cry
And will not let it rest?
O tender trees,
Your orchid, like a shepherdess of dreams,
Calls home her whitest dream from following
Elusive laughter of the unmindful god!

Vivace

The iris people dance
Like any nimble faun:
To rhythmic radiance
They foot it in the dawn.
They dance and have no need
Of crystal-dripping flute
Or chuckling river-reed;
Their music hovers mute.
The dawn-lights flutter by
All noiseless, but they know!
Such children of the sky
Can hear the darkness go.

But does the morning play
Whatever they demand,
Or amber-barred bourré
Or silver saraband?

II. In A minor

THE POOL

Allegretto

Cool-hearted dim familiar of the doves,
Thou coiled sweet water where they come to tell
Their mellow legends and rehearse their loves,
As what in April or in June befell
And thou must hear of, friend of Dryades
Who lean to see where flower should be set
To star the dusk of wreathéd ivy braids,
They have not left thy trees,
Nor do tired fauns thy crystal kiss forget,
Nor forest-nymphs astray from distant glades.

Thou feelest with delight their showery feet
Along thy mossy margin myrtle-starred,
And thine the heart of wildness quick to beat
At imprint of shy hoof upon thy sward:
Yet who could know thee wild who art so cool,
So heavenly-minded, templed in thy grove
Of plumy cedar, larch and juniper?
O strange ecstatic Pool,

What unknown country art thou dreaming of,
Or temple than this garden lovelier?

Who made thy sky the silver side of leaves,
And poised its orchid like a swan-white moon,
Whose disc of perfect pallor half deceives
The mirror of thy limpid green lagoon,
He loveth well thy ripple-feathered moods,
Thy whims at dusk, thy rainbow look at dawn!
Dream thou no more of vales Olympian:
Where pale Olympus broods,
There were no orchid white as moon or swan,
No sky of leaves, no garden-haunting Pan!

III. In F major

THE BIRDS

Presto

I keep a frequent tryst
With whirr and shower of wings:
Some inward melodist
Interpreting all things,
Appoints the place, the hours.
Dazzle and sense of flowers
Though not the least leaf stir,
May mean a tanager!
How rich the silence is until he sings!

The smoke-tree's cloudy white
Has fire within its breast.
What wingéd mere delight
There hides as in a nest
And fashions of its flame
Music without a name?
So might an opal sing,
If given thrilling wing,
And voice for lyric wildness unexpressed.

In grassy dimness thatched
With tangled growing things,
A troubadour rose-patched
With velvet-shadowed wings,
Seeks a sustaining fly.
Who else unseen goes by,
Quick-pattering through the hush?
Some twilight-footed thrush,
Or finch intent on small adventurings?

I have no time for gloom,
For gloom what time have I?
The orange is in bloom:
Emerald parrots fly
Out of the cypress-dusk:
Morning is strange with musk:

The wild canary now
Jewels the lemon-bough,
And mockingbirds laugh in the rose's room.

Presto meno assai — D major

The blossom-powdered orange-tree
For all her royal speechlessness,
Out of a heart of ecstasy
Is singing, singing, none the less!

Light as a springing fountain, she
Is spray above the wind-sleek turf:
Dream-daughter of the moon's white sea,
And sister to its showered surf!

IV. In A major

TO THE MOON

Allegro con brio

Moon that shone on Babylon,
Searching out the gardens there,
Could you find a fairer one
Than this garden, anywhere?
Did Damascus at her best
Hide such beauty in her breast?

When you flood with creamy light
Vines that net the somber pine,

Turn the shadowed iris white,
Summon cactus stars to shine,
Do you free in silvered air
Wistful spirits everywhere?

Here they linger, there they pass,
And forget their native heaven!
Flit along the dewy grass
Rare Vittoria, Sappho, even!
And the hushed magnolia burns
Incense in her gleaming urns.

When the nightingale demands
Word with Keats who answers him,
Shakspeare listens, understands,
Mindful of the cherubim:
And the South Wind dreads to know
Mozart gone as seraphs go.

Moon of poets dead and gone,
Moon to gods of music dear,
Gardens they have looked upon,
Let them re-discover here:
Rest, and dream a little space
Of some heart-remembered place!

THREE POEMS FOR R. P. C.

WITH A LITTLE FRENCH FLOWER

(To R. P. C.)

Go tell him, yellow giroflée,
I found you on an April day,
Where the white Indre pours its slow
Still silver round a gray château.
From an old wall you leaned to see
The moat reflect your witchery,
Ere the sweet river turned again
To wander on across Touraine.

How the bees grumbled when I took
Their flower to press it in my book!
The honey they had failed to get
Within your heart lies hidden yet,
As in my heart, unfound, unsought,
The hidden honey of my thought:
The shy words that I dare not say,
Go tell him, yellow giroflée!

TO R. P. C. WITH A BATON

THIS wand that tapers slenderly
From ebony to ivory,
Can call from brass and wood and strings
Beauty that is the soul of things.
With this divining-rod, among
Old woes and wonders long unsung
Thy hand shall grope, instinct to feel
What springs of music to unseal.
For thee — as when a master nods —
Shall sigh again the ancient gods:
Returning o'er their starry track
Thy summoned heroes shall come back.
For thee shall sound the hardihood
Of Mime's hammer in the wood,
And clearly down its glades forlorn
The challenge of young Siegfried's horn:
Thy violins shall call and sing
Like birds in Siegmund's House of Spring,
Or cry the heartbreak and the stress
Of Tristan's tragic tenderness:
Thy gesture shall bewitch the sky
With wild Valkyries streaming by:
Again dark Wotan with a word

TO R. P. C. WITH A BATON

Shall splinter the new-welded sword,
Shall still the battle's clang and shock,
And ring with flame Brünnhilde's rock;
And when on sobbing muted horns
Gray prophecies of the gray Norns
Foretell the coming twilight doom,
Across the menace and the gloom
Thy wand of magic shall not fail
To fling the radiance of the Grail.

When gods and heroes understand
And answer to thy beckoning hand,
Can I — if thou shalt set the time —
Refuse to answer thee in rhyme;
Withhold the uncourageous song
My soul has sheltered overlong?

As though a hidden mountain spring —
Small dreaming inarticulate thing —
Enchanted broad awake, should hear
The ocean's diapason near,
And chime of breakers on the sand
Thrill o'er the phantom hills inland,
(Nor recognize the organ-sound
Of the soft-thundering pines around,)
Then, music-startled out of sleep,

Should feel its tiny pulses leap,
And up the sheer blue heights of air
Against the very sun should dare
Lift its frail praise, and bid rejoice
Its thin and silver-dropping voice,
So shall that sealed and secret spring
That is my soul, find voice to sing,
By thy enchantment made aware
How the deep calls along the air.
Thy orchestra awake in the sun
At highest heave and farthest run
Shall fling me leagues on leagues away,
The magic of its poignant spray:
And I far inland, on that breath
Shall taste Life bittersweet — and Death:
Shall send my song fluttering alone
Where the sea calls unto its own —
A sea-bird beating far from me
Home to the breakers, home to sea.

VIOLIN-MAGIC

(To R. P. C.)

I HEARD you touch a fairy thing
That lured the trees to blossoming:
I saw them flush — and then you made
Their green leaves greener as you played.
You drew your bow so gently down
I dared not breathe, lest breathing drown
The tender little crooning tone
That was a wood-thrush all alone.
The tense string quivered, and I knew
Where grasses strange with morning dew
Climb a far hill I love, that all
The drops they wore shone magical,
Brimmed with the dawn, nor lovelier
Than those your crystal measures were,
The deepest forest-dusk you found
With silver darts of moonlit sound
That pierced the trees' reluctant crowd
And made the dryads laugh aloud;
I hear them now, and one I hear
Whose voice unearthly-thin and clear
Bears trace as through the trees she slips
Of wildwood honey on her lips.

But when your enigmatic mood
Nor dawn nor dusk of a deep wood
Nor dryad's laugh nor thrush's song
Nor April's blossoms would prolong,
And only wayward beauty calls
Along your argent intervals,
Then am I tranced with listening,
Lest my heart stir, or anything
Within me question, and your soul
Withdraw from mine its dear control;
Like him, Grail-sent, whom named of men
The white swan bore away again.

THE WHITE PEAK

(*El Peñon Blanco*)

It leans to hold the sunset
Against its savage breast,
Warmed by the last dull ragged red
Wind-blown along the west.

The dusk binds early stars
About its gaunt old head,
Reared where the winds of heaven go
Their way unshepherded.

One night I felt its heart beat
In rhythm sad and slow:
Was it the little calling bell
That trembled far below?

Was it the wolf that wandered
Unanswered, desolate,
Out of despair of loneliness
Chiding a silent mate?

God, how my heart remembers —
Heard on that barren height —
The bell that tolled, the wolf that cried,
The passionate wind of night!

TO A SCARLET TANAGER

My Tanager, what crescent coast
Curving beyond what seas of air,
Invites your elfin commerce most?
For I would fain inhabit there.
Is it a corner of Cathay
That I could reach by caravan,
Or do you traffic far away
Beyond the mountains of Japan?

If, where some iridescent isle
Wears like a rose its calm lagoon,
You plan to spend a little while,
An April or a fervid June,
Deign to direct my wanderings,
And I shall be the one who sees
Your scarlet pinnace furl its wings
And come to anchor in the trees.

Do you collect for merchandise
Ribbons of weed and jeweled shells,
And dazzle color-hungry eyes
With rainbows from the coral wells?

TO A SCARLET TANAGER

But when your freight is asphodels,
You must be fresh from Enna's lawn!
Who buys, when such a merchant sells,
And in what market roofed with dawn?

Much would it ease my spirit, if
To-day I might embark with you,
Low-drifting like the milkweed skiff,
Or voyaging against the blue,
To learn who speeds your ebon sails,
And what you do in Ispahan?
Do you convey to nightingales
Strange honey-dew from Hindostan?

With you for master-mariner,
I yet might travel very far:
Discover whence your cargoes were,
And whither tending, by a star:
Or what ineffable bazaar
You most frequent in Samarkand:
Or even where those harbors are
Keats found forlorn, in fairy-land.

THE SHIP

To-day my little Ship comes home,
And I will tell you what it brings:
Beyond the pale enchanted foam
I see its wings.
To-day my little Ship comes home.

It brings a seven-petaled rose
That on the steps of Pæstum grew:
Beauty that now no mortal knows
This wild rose knew.
It brings a seven-petaled rose.

It brings the reed a faun forgot
Because a dryad was so fair.
(Now he is loved and needs it not,
He will not care.)
It brings the reed a faun forgot.

It brings a little cedar-tree
From white Olympus many-glenned:
(Of weary gods it used to be
The well-loved friend.)
It brings a little cedar-tree.

Age-ripened wine it brings, likewise:
Sharp honey from Hymettus' hill:
Clear turquoise twilights found 'neath skies
Sea-fringed and chill.
Age-ripened wine it brings, likewise.

My laden Ship comes bounding home
To shaken throats of nightingales.
Salt crystals from Ægean foam
Cling to its sails.
To-day my little Ship comes home.

ON ARRANGING A BOWL OF VIOLETS

I DIP my hands in April among your faces tender,
O woven of blue air and ecstasies of light!
Breathed words of the Earth-Mother, although it is November,
You wing my soul with memories adorable and white.
I hear you call each other:
"Ah, Sweet, do you remember
The garden that we haunted — its spaces of delight?
The sound of running water — the day's long lapse of splendor,
The winds that begged our fragrance and loved us in the night?"

TO AN ORCHID

Moon-horned orchid in the oak,
Uttering thee, what spirit spoke?
Thou who hearest patiently
Humble *patois* of the bee,
Hast thou anything to tell
Of the angel Israfel?

Who would murmur half aloud
Word of wind or star or cloud,
If thy beauty were a throat
For his far ethereal note?
He by whom thou wert designed
Kin of cloud and star and wind?

Mystic flower, could'st thou say
If the little children play
Much with Mozart where he dreams
Daylong by the heavenly streams?
Does he tire of asphodel?
And with Keats, oh, is it well?

OLD NÜRNBERG

You mellow minstrel of a town,
So suave and weather-warmed and brown,
So red and blue and unafraid
Of colors Titian might have made,
Carmine and cobalt scarce belong
In sturdy staves of German song,
Which as you sing, you dare bedeck
With cadenced tints of peacock's neck!

You make and sing, as you have done
Through centuries of shade and sun,
A naïve music that beguiles,
Of porcelain spires and peach-bloom tiles,
And at your brownest you reveal
A message exquisitely real —
Dark topaz eaves of some old inn,
Or house-front like a violin.

Was amber most your mood, when he,
The Master,[1] marked your minstrelsy,
Or did you dream in azure smoke
And hide your colors 'neath a cloak?

[1] Richard Wagner.

OLD NÜRNBERG

Had your least tower been less fair,
Less like a voice across the air,
Or any dome less gold and blue,
Would he have stayed for love of you?

To him whom you enthralled so long,
You were the singer and the song:
Within your streets the tawny tone
Of ancient houses, most your own,
Was like an Aria he heard,
Bold rhythm mated to proud word,
And balcony or carven door
Struck chords he may have missed before.

Can you recall what undertones
Of mirth along your cobblestones
Allured him, or what far-flung spells
From lanes of legendary bells?
Somehow your beauty let him hear
Forgotten voices singing clear:
Somehow you made your meaning plain,
That Herr Hans Sachs might live again.

The Master long ago has gone,
But like his music, you sing on,
In colors clear and magical—

Emerald, coral, cardinal.
. . . I pray you, guard your antique grace,
The fountain in your market-place,
Your doves, your bells — and belfries too —
And that brown-amber smile of you!

A BEETHOVEN ANDANTE

The wood wind warbled wisely
Of how the dusk begins
Before the glow of sunset
Had left the violins:
And a cool flute spoke purely,
As though some spirit far,
Within the sunset's hollow
Had lit the evening star.

But when a simple oboe
Sang low and shepherd-sweet,
It was the awaited summons
That made the dusk complete.
Oh, quietly it led us,
With crook of slender gold,
Across the starry pastures
Into the farthest fold.

TO A NEW-BORN BABY GIRL

(*L. H.*)

And did thy sapphire shallop slip
Its moorings suddenly, to dip
Adown the clear, ethereal sea
From star to star, all silently?
What tenderness of archangels
In silver thrilling syllables
Pursued thee, or what dulcet hymn
Low-chanted by the cherubim?
And thou departing must have heard
The holy Mary's farewell word,
Who with deep eyes and wistful smile
Remembered Earth a little while.

Now from the coasts of morning pale
Comes safe to port thy tiny sail.
Now have we seen by early sun,
Thy miracle of life begun.
All breathing and aware thou art,
With beauty templed in thy heart
To let thee recognize the thrill
Of wings along far azure hill,

And hear within the hollow sky
Thy friends the angels rushing by.
These shall recall that thou hast known
Their distant country as thine own,
To spare thee word of vales and streams,
And publish heaven through thy dreams.
The human accents of the breeze
Through swaying star-acquainted trees
Shall seem a voice heard earlier,
Her voice, the adoring sigh of her,
When thou amid rosy cherub-play
Didst hear her call thee, far away,
And dream in very Paradise
The worship of thy mother's eyes.

THREE RHYMES

(To an Air from Mozart)

I

THE fairest tree the year can show,
It is the tree of Maytime snow:
The plum, the cherry and the pear
With snow-storms tangled in their hair!

II

The kindest brook that heart can wish,
Pours amber 'round its silver fish,
Runs not too deep, runs not too wild,
And follows like a friendly child.

III

The strangest of all fairy spells
Is in the veery's waft of bells,
That leaves the soul in midmost air
To climb the twilight's twinkling stair.

TO THE LADY IN THE CHECKERED DRESS

(A picture by Hilda Belcher)

LADY, may a lover guess
Why you destined for your dress
Ebony and ivory
Intermingled curiously?
Were you thinking of the moon
Spilling silver upon June,
And the velvet dark that holds
Roses curtained in its folds?
Had you seen at midmost night
Pale magnolia lamps alight?
In the faint sweet garden where
Lilies make a pool more fair,
Found them dimly shining yet,
Alabaster over jet?
Did you dream, could you know
Snow and shadow upon snow
Thus would lend fantastic grace
To your subtly-smiling face?
Could you know, did you guess
Such a daring rhythmic dress,
Gleaming here, darkening there,

TO THE LADY IN THE CHECKERED DRESS

Would but render you more rare?
Something whimsical in you
Tells me that you surely knew:
Tells me that you chose and planned
Whiteness that should match your hand:
Squares of dusk to suit your hair
And the shadows prisoned there.
Made of mystery as you are,
And remote as any star,
There is still your charm that clings —
Little wayward human things
That allure, that beguile:
Mona Lisa so would smile!
Still be kind, nor love me less
That the challenge of your dress,
O Fastidious and Sweet,
Gives me courage at your feet!

THE LITTLE TOWN

(*Written in Germany*)

O LITTLE town of memories,
So brown and golden in the light,
Do you remember one who sees
You beckon, day and night?

There is a sweet French town that broods
Dove-gray upon a rounded hill,
Whose peopled streets were solitudes
To me, a wanderer still.

And in the South, a white town sleeps.
Carven of ivory it seems,
But a man's heart perversely keeps
Such beauty for his dreams.

The rosiest, coziest town I know
Is this above the rushing Rhine:
Here might he stay who could not go
Home to a town like mine.

They do not know you, little town,
Who say that all roads lead to Rome:
I've tramped the broad world up and down,
And every road leads home.

ALLEGRETTO CAPRICCIOSO

BEYOND the river, lit by the low sun,
The green flame of the marshes dares the dusk,
And hems us in with thrilling emerald.
A redwinged blackbird rides a river-reed
As though it were a galleon,
And he, bold mariner, after many days
Of sailing perilous seas, were come to anchor
To leeward of some iridescent isle.
The tide 's at flood,
And shining ripples run along the reeds.
Suddenly you discover
Where an inverted elvish lily-leaf
Wears horns and pointed beard : Pan or his satyr,
Who slides behind the boat and vanishes
With backward grimace.
Somewhere upon the rim of sunset
A veery builds a magical tower of tone,
Amber and golden,
That gleams, once heard,
And crumbles into starlight.

The hills grow dim : they are putting on their stars.
The little pomegranate clouds

That ripened in the sky are all forgotten :
The hour passes.

But in my heart I know
One day a wind will blow softly from nowhere —
The immemorial wind of faëry —
And I shall hear a veery preluding starlight
Down by the gilded river
Where the tide runs and chuckles in the reeds :
Instantly I shall see
The redwing flash above the emerald marsh,
The inverted lily masquerade as satyr :
Once more the little clouds
Pomegranate-tinted,
Shall hang like wondrous fruit in highest heaven,
Ripe for archangels :
And I shall glimpse as now the gleam in your eyes,
Not bent upon me full — that were too human ! —
But peering sidewise like an ecstatic faun's.

AVE VENEZIA

THE ocean is a garden
That folds you closely home
With larkspur-blue from heaven,
And roses of bright foam.

The dawn upon your waters
Is like anemones.
Your noons are flaked with scarlet
As from pomegranate-trees.

The bubble towers that sunset
Dilates with rainbow light,
Dusk turns to shadowed silver
Like olive-trees at night.

O silver of dark olives,
Of cool night-shrouded seas,
That gives you rest from color,
And time for memories!

THE LAGOON AT NIGHT

(*Venice*)

Immemorial lagoon,
Where the drifted dusk lies deep,
Do lost years with ghostly shoon
Steal across your sighing sleep?

Is it wistfulness compels
Darkling waves to lift and gleam?
Do the Campanile bells
Summon back an ancient dream?

Are they wings that fan your tide?
In the darkness can you see
All the angels almond-eyed
Heaven lent to Italy?

All the faces meekly fair
Only Botticelli knew,
And serene in native air,
Lippo Lippi's angels, too?

Night-blue water, deep and dim,
When your ripples tremble, are
Raphael's little cherubim
Winging toward their distant star?

TO LAURENCE BINYON

(After hearing his lectures on Oriental Art)

THIS song is yours, for wonder of a mountain
With filmy cone of immemorial snow,
And for the windings of a river-valley
Whose crags and mists your spirit seemed to know.

You delicately spoke, and far trees murmured:
The waterfall stood white against the wind:
I scarce could tell its wistful shape of beauty
From that revealing beauty of your mind.

In plum-tree blossom and in peacock feather
You read the rune of immortality.
You gave a soul to tiger and to tempest,
And that dire dragon of the coilèd sea.

By a lone lake where most the wild fowl gather,
I thought you seemed to linger as at home.
Or have you known the lost shore's fairy margin
That Keats remembered for its fragile foam?

This is your song: for when my soul was empty,
You were strange beauty's unsuspected priest
To fill it, like a garden, full of flowers —
Those flowers that are the angels of the East.

SONG OF THE VEERY THRUSH

If through gray dusk there come to thee
From poplar-spire or cedar-tree
A little agile melody
With wingéd feet, like Mercury,

O let thy spirit follow where
It flits into the upper air!
For only so may mortals dare
Ascend the twilight's mystic stair.

The veery pondering alone
Devises magic of his own,
And wings with many a gleaming tone
His messengers divine, unknown.

. . . It is the moment! Now behold
The swift flight — ere the world turn cold!
Those notes like feathers of thin gold
A-whirl in spirals manifold —

O still thyself to hear them, ere
There be no singing anywhere,
Nor echoes even, for a stair
Of music up the serene air!

TO HERMES

(*In the Museum*)

HERMES, your little lovely boy,
Adoring you with look and laugh,
Implores you to remember joy
You had of feathered foot and staff:
How soon and gladly would you go,
If chubby fingers marble-pale
Tugged with the warmth they used to know,
And softness certain to prevail!

If, when he wonders to behold
The exiled fauns and centaurs sad,
Some memory of a coast of gold,
Or glimpse of Ithaca you had,
Or galley white against the sea,
Shall give your feet their wings again,
Will you not haste to set him free
From halls so cold and alien?

Should gods who grieve to see you go
Lean wistfully to bid you stay,
Tell them your baby boy must know
The elder beauty even as they:

Must learn the lure of island foam,
And Ætna's plume of vapor pale,
And why these make him most at home —
Vineyard and sea and nightingale!

A BREATH OF MINT

WHAT small leaf-fingers veined with emerald light
Lay on my heart that touch of elfin might?

What spirals of sharp perfume do they fling,
To blur my page with swift remembering?

Borne in a country basket marketward,
Their message is a music spirit-heard,

A pebble-hindered lilt and gurgle and run
Of tawny singing water in the sun.

Their coolness brings that ecstasy I knew
Down by the mint-fringed brook that wandered through

My mellow meadows set with linden-trees
Loud with the summer jargon of the bees.

Their magic has its way with me until
I see the storm's dark wing shadow the hill

As once I saw: and draw sharp breath again,
To feel their arrowy fragrance pierce the rain.

A BREATH OF MINT

O sudden urging sweetness in the air,
Exhaled, diffused about me everywhere,

Yours is the subtlest word the summer saith,
And vanished summers sigh upon your breath.

MESSAGE DECIPHERED ON AN ANCIENT VIOLA D'AMORE

If you will listen when I sing,
You restless little Leaf of Spring,
  Will close a while those ardent eyes,
And keep those hands from fluttering,

You shall detect the vain disguise
That music is for lovers' sighs,
  And hear them breathe immortally
Through tones astray from Paradise.

Brim with the fluent gold of me,
My amber pouring melody,
  As brooks with liquid sunlight do:
Your spirit's minstrel I would be!

Nay, let me be your sky of blue,
You whirling Almond Petal, you!
  The wind that chases you shall know
'T is Heaven he has lost you to!

What willing wind can ever blow
Your flowery fancies to and fro,

ON AN ANCIENT VIOLA D'AMORE

As my least zephyr of a phrase,
That urges and allures them so?

My Mistress, lo, I am the praise
Of your most delicate wild ways,
For I am Love. Oh, hear me sing
The beauty of your nights and days!

TO STEVENSON

(Of some Critics)

THEY scan the page all musical with perfect word and phrase,
And frown to find you trivial who talk of primrose ways,
Nor fathom your brave laughter, nor know the way you trod,
O serious-hearted wanderer upon the hills of God!

There where you lie beneath the sky far in a lonely land,
You who were even glad to die, — care not who understand
Your whimsical sweet strays of tune and your heroic mirth —
Diviner of Arcadian ways throughout the dreary earth!

ANDANTE CON MOTO

Across the quiet air there flows a tide
Of homing pigeons: soft
They settle on the carven cornices
And dip, and coo, and take the sun
That lies in shining ripples on their necks
And gilds their breasts.
The old gray church has set
To front the west,
A dome of tremulous amber,
Full of light:
The belfry frames a little colored cloud.
The strong sun, low and lower,
Grows reminiscent ere he vanishes.
Beyond the other towers
The evening star emerges luminous,
And the sky dims, recedes, and grows more vast.

The pigeons are asleep.
The church is veiled
In filmy dusk, and in the darkening city
Lights begin.

So tired I am: and how the night
Comes surely, softly!
It will be good to sleep.

MOTORING AT NIGHT

WHEN we had crossed the hills at last,
Smooth moth-gray valleys fluttered past:
Through gossamer mist and silver dew
We followed stars where stars were few,
And down a hollow country ran
That wore the moon for talisman.
Here, locust blossoms were in spray,
And wild-grape fragrance barred the way
With sudden walls of vague delight:
We brushed them by, we pierced the night,
Into the secret hours we sped,
With green leaves pouring overhead
From steady, somber trees. We found
The dim aloof enchanted ground
Where iris flowers beneath the moon
Bind on wild Hermes' wingéd shoon:
And then, ere yet the spell was gone,
We stopped, an hour before the dawn,
Under a dream-sequestered oak,
Hearkened our hearts, nor moved nor spoke
Till like a bright wind running by,
AURORA flitted up the sky.

TO THE MEXICAN NIGHTINGALE

(*El Clarin*)

CLARIN, from what glens of air
Chime your cameo-colored bells?
When they ring, I know them rare,
Fluted like the lips of shells
For the tone to ripple down,
Honey-pale or amber-brown.

When the tawny evening spills
Drops of topaz down the pine,
Light denied the dusking hills
Do you gather and confine
In some clear aerial jar,
On the branch where flits the star?

Do you pour the liquid light
Early from your lyric urn?
Nay, it was at midmost night
That I heard among the fern
Golden drops that fell in showers,
Shaken down as out of flowers!

TO THE MEXICAN NIGHTINGALE

When the rain of light was gone,
Poured in rhyming gold like rain,
How your elfin bells at dawn
Delicately chimed again,
Soft as sea-shells murmur of
Her whose lovely name is Love!

Did the Foam-Born brim those bells
With the wistful melodies
Of enchanted vocal shells?
Does the satin sigh of trees
Bring a memory of foam?
Clarin, do you sing of home?

"I WILL NOT GIVE THEE ALL MY HEART"

I WILL not give thee all my heart
For that I need a place apart
To dream my dreams in, and I know
Few sheltered ways for dreams to go:
But when I shut the door upon
Some secret wonder — still, withdrawn —
Why dost thou love me even more,
And hold me closer than before?

When I of Love demand the least,
Thou biddest him to fire and feast:
When I am hungry and would eat,
There is no bread, though crusts were sweet.
If I with manna may be fed,
Shall I go all uncomforted?
Nay! Howsoever dear thou art,
I will not give thee all my heart.

TO THE DONOR OF CERTAIN APPLES

May every day that makes the year
As luring to your eyes appear
And fragrant to your sense, as those
Your apples streaked with gold and rose:
Like them in beauty manifold,
Be curved and exquisite to hold,
All flavored with the wind and sun,
And brimmed with sweetness every one.
Could ordinary mortals know
The western orchard where they grow,
And watch the artist hours put on
New saffron and vermilion,
How master a more delicate art
For joy to ripen in the heart?
Or who could covet after these,
Mere gold from the Hesperides?

IN A MUSIC-ROOM

(To M. S. B.)

This room of lucent shoal-sea green,
With window-radiance poured between,
Is brimmed with reminiscent sound,
Like one the lost Endymion found,
When, wandering the ocean-floor,
He entered an enchanted door,
And heard the billows boom like bells
Above his head: and singing shells
In curious crystal monotone
Made him forget he was alone.
So I, within this lovely room,
Evade all wistfulness and gloom,
Hearing the great piano sing
Sweet as Theocritus in Spring.
The pictures on the sea-green walls
To what etherial festivals
Allure the thought? Is it for this
The player faces Artemis,
Who from her glancing golden frame
Bends whitely as a crescent flame

To feel the wind of music blow,
As once she felt it long ago?
And some immortal, lately gone,
Opened a window to the dawn
In yonder shimmering canvas, blue
And silver-green and lit with dew,
A subtle lyric for the eyes
In rhythms of the wild sunrise!
. . . But here is moonlight for the soul
Of the sun-wearied, where the whole
Broad ocean flashes bright and bare
Within a painter's magic square,
And through the splendor flutters pale
The wraith of a receding sail.
And here, above the mystic keys
Whose nocturnes rhyme with memories,
Content at quiet close of day,
Four Venice doves in blue and gray
Colored like dusk, divinely drowse.

. . . . . .

Now in this temple of white vows
To Beauty, I would breathe my own,
For here no mortal prays alone.

Once more, thou Polish Keats, a boon!
Snare me the music of the moon.

IN A MUSIC-ROOM

Mozart, thy wingéd sandals on,
Show me the way to Helicon.

Dear Robert Schumann, by thy grace
Detain shy Beauty in this place.

And thou, Beethoven, oh, invite
The gods to linger here to-night!

RHEIMS CATHEDRAL — 1914

A WINGÉD death has smitten dumb thy bells,
And poured them molten from thy tragic towers:
Now are the windows dust that were thy flowers
Patterned like frost, petaled like asphodels.
Gone are the angels and the archangels,
The saints, the little lamb above thy door,
The shepherd Christ! They are not, any more,
Save in the soul where exiled beauty dwells.
But who has heard within thy vaulted gloom
That old divine insistence of the sea,
When music flows along the sculptured stone
In tides of prayer, for him thy windows bloom
Like faithful sunset, warm immortally!
Thy bells live on, and Heaven is in their tone!

THE CHIMES OF TERMONDE

THE groping spires have lost the sky
That reach from Termonde town:
There are no bells to travel by,
The minster chimes are down.
It 's forth we must, alone, alone,
And try to find the way:
The bells that we have always known,
War broke their hearts to-day.

They used to call the morning
Along the gilded street,
And then their rhymes were laughter,
And all their notes were sweet.

I heard them stumble down the air
Like seraphim betrayed:
God must have heard their broken prayer
That made my soul afraid.
The Termonde bells are gone, are gone,
And what is left to say?
It 's forth we must, by bitter dawn,
To try to find the way.

They used to call the children
To go to sleep at night:
And then their songs were tender
And drowsy with delight.

The wind will look for them in vain
Within the empty tower.
We shall not hear them sing again
At dawn or twilight hour.
It's forth we must, away, away,
And far from Termonde town,
But this is all I know to-day —
The chimes, the chimes are down!

They used to ring at evening
To help the people pray,
Who wander now bewildered,
And cannot find the way.

TWELVE LITTLE LYRICS

1

THE WIND'S WAY

A WHITE way is the wind's way,
The silver side o' the leaf:
Follow the wind, heart of mine,
Heart of grief!

Wind of the dawn, wind of the dusk,
Wingéd wind of the day,
Who would follow the wind must go
The wind's way.

2

THE WISH

THE eastern cloud had morning at its core:
The river stood in silver at my door:
The valley held a great wind like the sea,
That poured its surging rapture over me,
And flung me challenge through the singing pine,
"Who could dispel such wistfulness as thine?

What hath the dawn forgotten or deferred?"
I said, "From him, my only love, one word!"

3

CAKE AND WINE

SHE took a pinch of pollen-dust,
A drop of moonlit dew,
And made the elf a magic cake
To help his vigil through:

And when the dawn crept up the sky,
With wine of clover pink
Spiced with heartsease, she brimmed a cup,
And gave it him to drink.

4

A SUNSET MOMENT

I SAW a cloud bloom in the west,
The color of a robin's breast,
And poppies in a cheerful crowd,
That caught the color of the cloud:
The garden walls so white before
Flushed to the red the poppies wore;

And when a wine-winged butterfly —
Flake of the sunset — floated by,
Quite suddenly on every hand
There lay before me Fairyland.

5

IN AN OLD FRENCH GARDEN

ONCE more down alleys sweet and dim
Glimmers the Spring begun:
The merchild on the fountain-rim
Romps naked in the sun:
The marble Pan has poised his reed
As though in act to play,
Yet pipes no summons. Who would heed
Now you have gone away?

6

EVENING SONG

LITTLE flakes of sunset
Blown about the sky,
Burn like trellised roses
Blooming heaven-high.

You should have one for your hair,
And a star to pin it there,
If the wind were I!

Perilous your rose-face!
How shall I beware?
No gold so forbidden
As your shining hair!
Rose of sunset, golden rose,
If you knew what my heart knows,
Would it make you care?

7

"ADIOS, AMIGO"

FAREWELL, comrade!
Follow the trail.
Does it avail
That I am sad?

When the day dies,
Where will you be?
The stars shall see
Tears in my eyes.

8

"BROWN VEERY"

BROWN veery by the river,
Brown wood thrush in the pine,
Your golden harps a-quiver
Shall silence song of mine!
Until my thought deliver
One phrase as frail and fine,
Sing, Minstrel by the river,
Sing, Poet in the pine!

9

MAGNOLIA MOONS

LAST night the moon of April
Went sailing up the sky.
I crept into the garden
When nobody was by,
For it was long past bedtime
For children such as I.

The garden was n't sleepy
Even so late at night:

The cactus-buds were open,
Brimful of silver light,
And all the great magnolia
Had flowered in globes of white.

I saw they were moon-colored
And shiny, just the way
The big moon looked above me:
And there I meant to stay,
But mother said magnolia moons
Would shine as bright next day.

10

THE RIVER

As I went down the cedar stair,
I saw the river pacing fair
Between its tender tilted lawns,
And past a thousand sailing swans.

And I forgot strange talk of wars,
To see its ripples swarm with stars:
And all the thoughts that I could think
Were swans along the river-brink.

11

TO THE WIND

You little lovely wind
With starry brow,
What gift have you in mind
To bring us now?

You cross the lilac-tree
On silver feet,
But it is memory
Makes you so sweet!

For such a wind as you
With stars above,
Led day-worn lovers to
Their night of love.

12

NIGHTINGALES

At sunset my brown nightingales
Hidden and hushed all day,
Ring vespers, while the color pales
And fades to twilight gray:

The little mellow bells they ring,
  The little flutes they play,
Are soft as though for practising
  The things they want to say.
It's when the dark has floated down
  To hide and guard and fold,
I know their throats, that look so brown,
  Are really made of gold.
No music I have ever heard
  Can call as sweet as they!
I wonder if it *is* a bird
  That sings within the hidden tree,
  Or some shy angel calling me
To follow far away?

POEMS FOR ELSA AND HILDA

FAIRY MUSIC

TO ELSA AND HILDA

O YOU shall play a seaweed harp,
And you, a beechnut violin,
Till your thin music silver-sharp
Invites the vagrant fireflies in.

And you shall play a moonbeam flute,
And you, a mullein-stalk bassoon,
Till all the crickets gather mute
To criticize beneath the moon.

And you shall play the shepherd horn
That calls white fancies home like sheep:
And you, the oboe all forlorn
That Oberon gave you to keep.

For you will both be fairies then.
And one shall sound a coilèd shell
To pilot fairy sailormen,
And one shall ring a crystal bell.

And you with yellow hair will need
A willow whistle cut at dawn:

But *you* shall play a river-reed
Like any little nut-brown faun.

And Syrinx will forget to flee,
And Pan, what mischief he had planned:
And she with you will dance while he
Pipes up the moon of Fairyland.

TO ELSA

(On the Fly-Leaf of "A Child's Garden of Verses")

ALL on a day of gold and blue,
Hearken the children calling you!
All on a day of blue and gold,
Here for your baby hands to hold,
Flower and fruit and fairy bread
Under the breathing trees are spread.
Here are kind paths for little feet:
Follow them, darling! You shall meet
Past the enchanted garden-door,
Friends by the hundred: maybe more!
Why do you linger? Ah, you elf,
Must he come for you then himself?
He of the laughing look and mild,
Whimsical master, glorious child?
There you go now, away from me.
"Where are you Elsa?"
It is he!
"Come, we must hurry, I and you,
We've such a number of things to do:
Posies to gather, thrushes to hear,
People to wonder about, my dear!
Take my hand like a good girl. Yes,
I am the gardener, R. L. S."

A MEXICAN LULLABY

Away across the yellow plain
The sleepy sun before he goes
Has hung the shoulders of the hills
With velvet folds of gold and rose:
And in the garden of the sky
The petals of the stars uncurl
Like flowers blooming overhead:
It 's sleepy time, my brown-eyed girl!

The mules are safe in the corral:
The burros on the homeward road
Trudge patiently along and think
Of laying down the heavy load:
And high upon the mountain-side
The goat-herd's camp-fire, all ashine,
Tells that the goats have gone to bed.
Good-night, O blue-eyed maid of mine!

What if the big white stars come out
And find the whole world sound asleep
Excepting just two little girls
Whose wilful eyes wide open keep?

And there are wingéd dreams that come
To flutter 'round your beds at night:
They *never* kiss wide-open eyes,
So cuddle down, and shut them tight!

TO ELSA

(With a volume of "The Arabian Nights")

WHEN first your dimpled foot shall press
The enchanted carpet, who can guess
To what unhallowed crescent coast
It may transport you: to what host
Of turbaned aliens, clamoring,
Abandon you, or to what king?
A lure beyond the silken sea
Of amber light and ivory,
A porcelain tower, a gilded wall,
A low, monotonous bell to call
You inland from the smiling strand,
And, oh, it might be Samarkand!
But wandering, a child alone,
Whose hand would comfort you, my own?
You are so little, who would heed
To give you sweetened milk at need,
Honey, and dates, and let you taste
Pistachio-nut and almond-paste,
Citron and fig and magic myrrh,
And bathe you all in rose-water,
And see you shod in sandalwood?
If only bells you understood,

TO ELSA

What voice would soothe your drowsy hour,
My just-unfurled pomegranate-flower?

When first that swift steed, raven-black,
Bears you to Bagdad on his back,
Nor keeps the ground, but soars in air
And prances gloriously there,
Will you forget me in your glee?
For he has fed on sesame
Until he dares forbidden things:
And feeling you between his wings,
What if he fled beyond the sun
And stars with you, my golden one?

Or seaward-swept at sunset, while
He heeds your laughter, some lone isle
Bound with great waves, may bid him rest
Upon its opalescent breast.
You could not see the darkening world
Within his ebon vans close-curled,
Or know their blackness from the night:
But if impatient for the light,
He shook them free and sought the air
To meet the earliest dawning there,
Who would befriend a baby girl
Or find my island-prisoned pearl?

Nay, wait a little while, my sweet,
Lest all too soon your questing feet,
Threading the palace, pause before
The one desired, forbidden door:
The thieves that Ali Baba knew
Would leave the treasure, seeing you,
And lock you in their cave from me,
Deaf to my "Open sesame."
I fear the curious-voweled speech
Of those veiled women, and the reach
Of the dread caliph's arm. Oh, where
All is most beautiful, beware!

And when Aladdin bends to hear
What you would whisper in his ear,
(For he the wondrous lamp must hold
That you may rub its tarnished gold,)
Smile, darling little sorceress you,
And say: "Sir, if my wish come true,
Your jewel-garden I would see.
And may my mother go with me?"

TO MY BABY HILDA

(*With Hawthorne's "Wonder-Book"*)

WITHIN your eyes are memories
Of foam-ringed isles in azure seas,
Of dragon-guarded groves, and gold
That none but destined hands might hold.
You were a sprite of that wild world
Hercules challenged: you were curled
Within the enchanted bowl and kept
Watch for the hero when he slept,
Lulled to oblivion curiously
By pleasant clangor of the sea
Against the hollow gold. You saw
High-towering Atlas without awe,
And, perched upon the tilted rim
Of your odd craft, eluded him,
You were so little. And you came
To a white isle of unknown name,
Where hideous Gorgons laired together:
And found Medusa's shining feather,
And saw slim Perseus from the air
Descend, and met Quicksilver there,
Adorable god! Oh, was it he

Persuaded you to come to me,
And bound the wingéd sandals on
That bore you far from Helicon?

To-day you were remembering
Some glorious prenatal thing,
And I, who saw a snowy gleam
Like a great sail across your dream,
Heard music that I knew must be
Orpheus awake, till suddenly
The Argo swept with sheer surprise
That blue Ægean of your eyes,
And there were you, close folded in
The warmth of Jason's leopard-skin,
Showered with foam, shouting in glee
Till Jason laughed: and even she,
The goddess of the talking oak,
Smiled down at you and softly spoke,
"Child, happy child, and is it true
We sail to win the fleece for you?"

So when your eyes more thoughtfully
Take on the color of the sea,
I feel your heart go hungering home
Down the immortal wind and foam
To find again the friends you knew—

TO MY BABY HILDA

Pandora and her wayward crew
Of playfellows, small Marigold,
The sisters weird and gray and old,
Europa on the snow-white bull,
The little lad who watched the pool
Till Pegasus appeared and flew
Sun-bright across the mirrored blue.

Will you recall — that I may guess —
The tint and breath and loveliness
That were Proserpina? Again
Hear Ceres crying through the rain
To call her darling back, and run
To comfort her as you have done?

And since I would not have you miss
That wingèd life, remember this:
For you will Pegasus alight
In any garden, and the white
Small bloom Quicksilver cherished spring
To beauty at your summoning.
Stoop deftly down, my wonder-maid,
Secure that flower, and unafraid
Enter the seaward-looking room
That holds the song of Circe's loom:
Draw very near, that you may see

Ulysses cross her tapestry:
And should you be inwoven there,
Whisper the wanderer to beware.
But I shall watch the fountain change
In the wide porch, upflinging strange
Frail crystal shapes that prophesy:
And should a brisk youth happen by
With cap most oddly fluttering,
And wilful sandal-shoon that spring
Into the air to make him laugh,
And careless cloak and twisted staff,
Shall I not say, befriending you
As any mother ought to do,
"Sir, will you bless her with your care
Who has the golden fleece for hair?
Give her the winged mind and wise
Who has the deep sea in her eyes?"

ENVOY

TO ELSA AND HILDA

LAS TARDES DE ABRIL

Afternoons of April when the yuccas hold
Ivory pagodas peaked with dusty gold,
Will you find the garden with the Silver Tree?
Will my garden love you as it once loved me?

Busy with its mocking-birds and soft South wind,
You shall find it loving, you shall know it kind:
You shall seek the shy god, searching everywhere
Afternoons of April when he hides him there!

May they leave you laughter as they flutter by,
Afternoons of April winging down the sky!
Drop you plumes of twilight ere the moon is white,
Loose the orange-odors for the dappled night!

Eyes as blue as heaven (O shy Rose-souled!),
Eyes of russet amber (my Heart of Gold!),
Only you shall love them, find them when you look —
Afternoons of April in your mother's book!

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